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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Monday, July 24, 1939.

Subject: "FROM WORSE TO BETTER." Information from the Farm Security Administration, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Several times in recent months I have given this radio audience a gripping individual story of successful struggle against discouragement and defeat. These were accounts of farm families that had reached absolute bottom financially. Having nowhere else to turn for aid, they had applied to the Farm Security Administration for a loan. This loan turned out to be the first step on the return road to stability.

For before a Farm Security loan can be granted, the farm supervisor and the farm home management supervisor go over the situation of the applicants. With them a better plan is worked out for running the farm and managing the home, particularly the family food supply. The farm family agrees to follow this plan if granted a loan. And once they see how things improve for them they usually continue along the same general lines and get ahead.

Today's story, instead of being about a single family, is the success story of the Farm Security Administration borrowers the country over, after 3 years of joint effort on the part of the families and the local supervisors. Figures must be quoted, but they are dramatic and interesting.

At the beginning of the current year there were about 233,000 of these families on Farm Security Administration rolls. These families averaged 5.1 persons each- totalling more than a million individuals altogether. About 125,000 of these families were third year clients; the others were more recently enrolled.

Perhaps the best way to show quickly what these 233,000 families have gained by means of the loan that set them on their feet is to look at the change in their net worth. That is, compare what they had when they sought aid and what they have now. "Net worth" may include land or buildings owned, value of farm machinery and tools, value of stock and work animals, value of food stored and preserved for home use, value of household equipment, minus all debts.

The average net worth of first year clients before acceptance was about \$900. At the end of the 1938 crop year this figure had increased by almost \$200- about 22 percent. Second and third year clients whose net worth before acceptance averaged only \$632 show an even better increase- \$296. The total increase in net worth for all rehabilitated families is an impressive figure- just under 63 million dollars.

Translated into possessions, the increase may mean that the family has acquired a team of horses, or a plow, or a milk cow, or some cattle; it may have a little more farm land or some insurance; or the housewife may have obtained a better cookstove or part ownership in a neighborhood pressure cooker with which to can foods for the coming winter. Where 6,000 clients in 1937 used pressure cookers, in 1938, 92,000 were using them.

This one piece of equipment accounts for a considerable part of the increase in foods which these families have tucked away against winter's needs. The total figures for all families are in terms of quarts of fruits and vegetables canned, pounds of meat, gallons of milk, and dozens of eggs produced for home use, and bushels of fruit, roots and tubers stored during the year.

For those of you who don't mind figures, I'll say that the average increase per family in fruits and vegetables canned is 170 quarts. Those families average 292 more pounds of meat, 366 more gallons of milk- that's a gallon a day-; 88 more

dozens of eggs, and 28 more bushels of such foods as apples, potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots, turnips, and so on, that can be stored. These, remember, are the increases in the foods each family now has over what it had the year before the Farm Security Administration entered the picture.

Best of all, most of the families have discovered, for one thing, that home grown food saves cash expenditures, so they can put the difference into other much needed purchases. For another thing, foods raised at home according to the farm home management supervisor's plan mean a better all around diet for the family, consequently better health, fewer medical expenses, more energy, even more ambition.

I'll skip over the increased number of cattle, hogs, poultry and work animals these rehabilitated families have now. That's all represented in their net worth. You will be interested in the fact that while only 37 percent of first year clients had written leases, 81 percent of all the clients now have them. In other words, second and third year clients have shown effectively that they are desirable tenants and have learned to make more businesslike arrangements with their landlords.

The number of Farm Security families who have advanced from the status of "sharecroppers" to tenant farmers is very encouraging. Twenty-six thousand, eight hundred such families now have a better chance to enjoy the fruits of their own labor.

Another interesting sidelight on the advancement of many of the client families is the large number of children of school age who are now attending school for the full school year. Children whose families move from place to place, or who have to help with farm work to eke out a bare existence, or who have no suitable clothes to wear, do not get a proper chance for education. One hundred and eighty-seven thousand rural children are now back in school, with shoes on their feet, books under their arms, and full lunch boxes.

This constantly brightening picture of re-established farm families still has a few dark spots, but as net worth goes up, they are gradually lessening in number and importance. It's too bad that only 57 percent of these families have an approved water supply, and only 41 percent sanitary toilets. Sixty-one percent have screens. Compared with all farm families, however, many of whom have poor facilities even though better off financially, these percentages are not too discouraging. Improvement is a matter of having more farm income. On every hand client families are reporting great encouragement over what they have gained in one to three years of helpful supervision and a well-thought-out farm plan. Loans are being steadily repaid, and as money becomes available, other eligible farm families will be taken care of.

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